

FIGHT AGAINST COUNCIL CUTS



BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL WORKER

Bin workers in Birmingham continue their courageous strike, now into its seventh week of all-out action, against attacks which would slash the pay of a whole section of the workforce.

The Labour-led council had announced a state of emergency under the guise of public health. It is now also using Tory anti-trade union laws to use police and now army planners to try and undermine the strike.

If the council really did care about public health, it wouldn't be cutting the safety-critical role of the bin workers. It wouldn't be implementing cuts that exacerbate poverty and inequality: cutting day care centres and libraries, increasing social isolation; selling of flats when tens of thousands are on the council housing waiting list. Councils across the country are making cuts like these and raising taxes, making working-class people pay the price with continued austerity.

In short, the Labour council, backed to the hilt by the Labour government, is more interested in finding another stick to beat the striking bin workers with than it is in public health.

Despite the council's attempts to demonise the bin workers in the press, public support for the strike remains high. When Socialist Party members are out campaigning around the city in support of the strike, the response is overwhelmingly positive. While an £8,000 pay cut might be peanuts for council commissioners, ordinary people in Birmingham know it needs to be fought.

There is also significant support for the strike within the council workforce. My division of over 100 council workers had a meeting with management where we were asked: 'What can the council do to make employees feel valued?' The response was clear: 'Stop the cuts and pay the bin workers!'

All the council trade unions have an important role to play in mobilising support in solidarity with the bin workers. The wider trade union movement too. Solidarity mobilisations to bin-worker picket lines and rallies from other trade unions – starting with the council unions – would not only be a massive boost to the strike, but could mark the beginnings of a city-wide movement to win the funding Birmingham needs from central government to halt and reverse these austerity attacks, including the 21% council tax rise for Birmingham residents.

The Socialist Party is building support for the West Midlands Shop Stewards Network meeting on 26 April, called to discuss how to build solidarity with the bin strike and fight all the cuts at Birmingham council.

This dispute is of critical importance to all council workers. We know that if the council thinks it can beat the most militant and organised section of the workforce, it will come for the rest of us too!

If Labour councils attack workers, they can't be trusted to stand up for our interests. They need to be challenged at the ballot box. Around the country, over 100 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates are standing against them in the 1 May local elections.

Stand with striking bin workers

'How can we build a citywide movement to defeat the cuts?'

Saturday 26 April, 12 noon
Comfort Inn, Station Street,
Birmingham City Centre, B5 4DY

Public meeting hosted by West Midlands National Shop Stewards Network

theSocialist

formerly **Militant**

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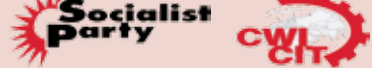
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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."
Karl Marx

GPs to get £20 every time they don't send a patient to hospital!

ALEX SAMPSON
PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

The Labour government's latest plans to reduce NHS waiting lists and the huge pressures on hospital consultants are encouraging GPs not to send patients to hospital. GPs will receive £20 every time a patient is successfully referred to a community hub rather than to a hospital specialist. Examples used include referrals for ear, nose and throat issues, irritable bowel syndrome, and menopause treatments.

A focus on cutting waiting lists may feel like welcome news to the millions of patients who are in the huge backlog caused by over a decade of cuts. But will this be a real solution to the issues that face our crumbling NHS?

A large part of this plan rests on the creation of more Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs), which are built outside of hospitals, often in easy-to-reach town centre locations. Some CDCs are open 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Labour's stated aim to improve waiting times and healthcare comes up against its self-imposed strict spending rules. In Plymouth alone, the University Hospital Trust has just announced £67 million in cuts which could mean up to 600 job losses at Derriford Hospital, already struggling to cope with heavy workloads and lack of staff.

More choice and flexibility is positive for people desperate to be seen



PHOTO: NUMBER 10/CC

by a health professional. But this plan is being implemented with the increased involvement of private healthcare companies, who are already straining at the bit to increase the profits they make from our ill health. GPs directing more work to services provided by private healthcare firms will be a real detriment to already underfunded NHS services. Health Secretary Wes Streeting has made no secret of his desire to use more private healthcare companies rather than rebuild a fully nationalised NHS.

As the salami slicing of our precious and hard-fought-for health service continues, working-class people will continue to lose access to very necessary health services. Huge numbers of people have already lost dental services and some of the ear, nose and throat services referred to – such as ear wax removal – are almost entirely only available for a charge now. This might seem reasonable to an MP on over £90,000 a year, but a charge of £50 to a minimum-wage worker could be the difference between being able to eat or get to work for a week.

Our NHS is under threat from Labour just as much as it was from the previous Conservative governments.

Good health should not be the preserve of the wealthy or the lucky. Everyone should have access to high quality health care, no matter where they live or what they earn. To protect our precious NHS, we need to fight for it. We need to build a new mass workers' party with a socialist programme, which would reverse all the cuts of the last 15 years of austerity and reinstitute a fully funded health service, free from the private-healthcare vultures, with a democratically nationalised pharmaceutical industry and free for all to use.



PHOTO: CASEY LEHMAN/CC

Underpaid teachers seeing pupils undernourished by decades of austerity

ISIS SMYTH
LIVERPOOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

One third of teachers are seeing physical underdevelopment in poorer pupils – this rising to more than half in deprived areas, the results of a recent National Education Union survey found. Many schools are having to help poor families out financially, with kids coming to school hungry and fatigued. 92% of teachers in deprived areas are fatigued, in part from the impact of teaching kids in poverty. 74% of school support staff reported kids having poverty-related poor hygiene. School budgets are stretched thinner and thinner by the day, as the new Labour government continues Tory underfunding. The majority of teachers and support staff pay for food and learning supplies for their pupils out of their own pocket.

This report was published a few weeks after Labour announced cuts to the benefit system. This will only make things worse. 31% of all children in the UK are living in poverty

and struggle to attend or focus at school because of this. This includes almost half of UK families with at least one disabled child. With children and their parents facing the removal of PIP and other benefits, many don't know where to turn.

Labour has shown that it is no longer a party representing the working class. Its priorities lie with the interests of big businesses. Workers, families and children alike are being failed by this government and an increasingly marketised school system. Whilst teaching staff are paying for school supplies and food for pupils out of their own pockets, and children are showing signs of hunger throughout the school day, Labour is funnelling more money into wars. And teachers themselves work long hours and aren't paid what they deserve.

We need a new mass workers' party to support trade unions in furthering the rights of workers, and to fight for socialist change to abolish poverty once and for all.

Back the TUSC no-cuts stand in the local elections

Councils of all stripes have spent the last decade and a half implementing the austerity demanded by Tory-led governments. Now Keir Starmer's Labour has taken the reins and its more of the same. Working-class people across the country have seen council tax rises, services cut and – as the massive Birmingham bin strike has highlighted – workers expected to take pay cuts.

Socialist Party members are standing in the local elections this year as part of the Trade

Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – the sixth largest stand. TUSC brings together socialists, trade unionists, campaigners and others. These candidates don't accept that there is no alternative to endless cuts. They are standing on a platform of no cuts, for needs-based budgets and building mass, working-class campaigns with the local unions and community groups to win the resources required for the public services we need.

Is Reform UK on the side of workers?

ADAM HARMSWORTH
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

Starmer's Labour's ten months in power has brought no positive change for the majority of people. Many will wonder if there even was an election, because Labour is acting just like the Tories.

Looking for a means to strike out at Labour and Tories in the local elections on 1 May, some working-class people will vote Reform. Nigel Farage's latest party took 4.1 million votes in the general election, winning five MPs. Ever since, it's been high in opinion polls. On picket lines I've been on, some trade unionists have expressed support for them.

When Labour stopped short of nationalising Scunthorpe steelworks, Farage called for it to be nationalised. But he made clear that, in his view, instead of it being run for the benefit of workers it should be sold on to the next buyer – for a new mega-rich billionaire to extract profit from the workforce.

Farage sometimes poses as 'a friend of the working class'. But while working-class communities are reeling after years of austerity, Reform has pledged to reduce spending by £150 billion, another round of brutal

austerity. At its local election launch in March, Farage criticised Starmer's disability benefit cuts... for not going far or fast enough!

The selling off of the NHS by Labour and Tory governments has been a catastrophe, but companies have made billions of pounds from it. Reform explicitly calls for further NHS privatisation. Privatisation on steroids won't improve the service for us, just the bank balances of private health providers. Farage has said he is open to exploring all options for the NHS, including ending the free and universal model we have now.

Reform is funded by bankers, CEOs and millionaires who all believe Reform will work for them as the Tories did for so long. Many former Tory donors have switched to Reform. They are the establishment's 'anti-establishment' party, acting in the interests of the



PHOTO: GWAIN DAVIES/CC

super-rich and trying to pass it off as 'common sense policies'. In reality, their politics are more like 'common sense' for big business and disastrous for the rest of us.

Many of us worry about not finding a job, NHS waiting lists, housing waiting lists and more overstretched council services. Reform pledges to cut migration, but they want to slash our services too, leaving all workers worse off.

In the run-up to last year's election, Farage called Reform "a brand new conservative movement". Workers don't need a new movement that will champion the horrors of the last fifteen years of Conservative government. Workers need a party that acts in their interests, not flooded with bankers' bribes. Vote TUSC where it's on the ballot, and help us build the mass workers' party that we need to actually challenge the establishment.



Mansfield PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

Why we're standing for TUSC

"I'm Myles, an Exeter local and member of Unite Community. And I am standing with TUSC because its time we said no to cuts, no to career politicians, and no to the rampant inequality we see in Exeter today.

I have seen first hand the damage austerity has done to our streets, we all have. Rising homelessness, worsening education, rising NHS wait times, and the lack of housing meaning families having to wait at least seven years for social housing.

In this election I pledge to stand on the side of the working class, for our communities, schools, and services. Together, we can build an Exeter that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few."

MYLES HATCHER, TUSC CANDIDATE FOR DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL



Myles Hatcher PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION



If you have the chance, use your vote in these local elections to support a no-cuts, working-class challenge with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. And if you can't, get in touch to help build a fighting alternative in future elections, standing yourself or helping us to campaign.

● Find out more visit: tusc.org.uk

What about the Green Party?



PHOTO: JAMES BOWE/CC

OSCAR PARRY
CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY

Another major beneficiary of Starmer's pro-big business policies this election is likely to be the Green Party. Many voters will put a cross next to the Greens expecting a change from the pro-austerity policies of the rest of the main parties. But will electing Green councillors make a difference for working-class people?

There are already over 800 Green councillors. And the Green Party says it is opposed to austerity. But these councillors aren't using the position to help mobilise the fight-back for the funds our communities need. Instead they parrot the line that councils have no choice but to pass on cuts.

The Greens became the largest party on Bristol council last year, promising change after years of service cuts under Labour. What has this meant for Bristol? £50 million more

cuts! Councillors repeatedly spoke of the collaboration between parties in the budget process, congratulating themselves for bringing together a 'broad church' of different ideologies. It's hardly a wide array of opinions when they're united in cuts and devastating the most vulnerable with cuts to domestic violence services, bin collections and more. Similarly, while in power twice in Brighton, the Green council passed the cuts onto local residents' vital public services and faced strike action from bin workers twice.

Socialist Party members standing as part of TUSC will work with anyone who is opposed to the cuts and willing to build the fight against them. If this includes Green councillors, we will work alongside them to fight back against Labour austerity. Working-class people can fight back and win – a new mass party representing the working class would be a massive step forward in this fight.

SUPREME COURT RULING A BLOW TO TRANS RIGHTS

Fight for a united working-class struggle against all oppressions and for socialism



WHAT WE THINK

The Supreme Court ruling on Wednesday 16 April 2025 proves yet again that minority rights are not secure in a society in which a capitalist elite relies on scapegoating to preserve their rule. This is especially the case now when that rule is engulfed by crisis and its defenders are unable to build and maintain support bases.

The undemocratic and unaccountable Supreme Court ruled on a question of “statutory interpretation” in a case brought by For Women Scotland (FWS). It found that “a person with a Gender Recognition Certificate in the female gender does not come within the definition of ‘woman’ for the purposes of sex discrimination” under the Equality Act. FWS says it aims to “protect and strengthen women and children’s rights”. But neither this ruling nor any future attack on trans rights will improve the situation facing women in austerity Britain.

This Labour government is not on the side of working-class women: the WASPI women fighting for their pensions were denied, the two-child benefit cap was maintained, and the

latest Budget statement announced disability benefit cuts while increasing spending on warfare.

The solidarity protests of tens of thousands across the country days after the ruling show the potential for mass resistance against division. The task is to build a united movement that fights against Starmer’s war and austerity agenda, for women’s rights, trans rights, and for a socialist alternative to the misery on offer from the capitalist system he defends.

The context is years of attacks on trans people by Tories seeking to distract from their cost-of-living crisis. Today under Starmer, Labour’s ten-percentage-point decline in support is the largest slump of any governing party in its first months in office in 50 years.

What this ruling means in law is unclear. Kishwer Falkner, chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), said it meant access to single-sex facilities such as changing rooms “must be based on biological sex”. The Labour government echoes this but legal experts are divided over whether it means services and organisations are compelled to exclude trans women, or that they may. What this means for trans men or even some tall, short-haired women is also a concern. Who will police the bathrooms and changing rooms? Where will trans women go? All of this is not answered.

But the main impact of this ruling



Capitalist politicians – and the institutions that serve the capitalist class’s interests – point to trans women as the main threat to safety within the very public services whose funding they cut and privatise

is clear. The tiny trans population will face more challenges in terms of access to public services and legal rights, and the dangers to trans rights and identities from an emboldening of those who oppose them. In the year ending March 2024, 4,780 hate crimes against transgender people were recorded. That’s an increase of about 60% on 2021 figures, the year the census found that there were around 262,000 people, 0.5% of the population, who identified as having a gender different from their sex assigned at birth.

Divide and rule

This is not the last attack on trans people – or other minorities – while



this increasingly unpopular government remains in power. Starmer and Co are seeking to defend a capitalist system in which working-class living standards are falling and war and climate change wreck lives. This profit-first capitalist system is based on the exploitation of the majority by a tiny minority. In seeking to maintain that intolerable situation, Labour can reach into a well-developed playbook in which the capitalist class has honed how it seeks to undermine potential mass opposition. This includes using the many differences – skin colour, sexuality, disability, gender, age, working status, etc, etc – that exist among the working class in an attempt to weaken our collective potential ability to fight back and challenge their rule.

In 1988, Thatcher’s homophobic Section 28, for example, which banned schools from “promoting homosexuality”, coincided with the divisions in her Cabinet starting to emerge. Section 28 also lacked clarity but had the effect of forcing teachers and students into the closet and emboldening homophobic bullying, causing huge suffering. Three years later Thatcher was removed from office when another vicious anti-working-class law – the poll tax – was defeated by a united mass working-class movement.

That’s why the divisive approach of many of the campaigners who have welcomed this ruling is mistaken and must be opposed. They lean on fears over women’s rights, safety and services, to which our movement needs to offer political arguments and action to fight together for what we all need. This Supreme Court ruling will do nothing to improve women’s safety or access to services.

Capitalist anti-trans division is based on an appeal to the fear of male violence and of attacks on women’s rights, including

women-only spaces. As with all culture-war appeals, the invitation to feel this fear can appeal to women’s experience of capitalist society where male violence against women remains deeply ingrained, notwithstanding legal improvements in recent decades. Because of pre-existing oppression, women are hit hardest by austerity. Capitalist politicians – and the institutions that serve the capitalist class’s interests – point to trans women as the main threat to safety within the very public services whose funding they cut and privatise. They barely mention trans men or non-binary people, even though that is how a majority of young trans people now identify.

Violence against women

Single-sex spaces are not safe in a society where violence against women is tolerated. In 2023, of the 548 police officers being investigated for sexual misconduct and domestic abuse claims, 347 were working as normal and 236 were placed on restricted duties.

A staggering 97% of young women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment. The view of women as objects and as second-class citizens that contributes to this is reinforced by the sexist objectification of women in advertising and other profit-seeking industries, and by women’s low pay at work.

As a result, for many women even their home is not a safe space. Two women a week are killed by violent partners or ex-partners. The biggest threat to domestic violence refugees is not trans women seeking support, but austerity, continued by Starmer, which has cut and closed refuges. The lack of council homes forces women to stay in violent situations.

Now the EHRC has been charged with working out what the new interpretation of the Equality Act means



Ending discrimination in society will also not be done by a law or a court within a system that relies on division to maintain its exploitation. We can only win in the courts what we have won in the workplaces and on the streets through collective organising

in practice. This body proved its credentials as a defender of the capitalist establishment in the role it played in the false accusations of antisemitism against Jeremy Corbyn.

Working-class struggle

Nor was the Equality Act ever a guarantee of equality of provision of services. That can only be achieved through struggle for funding the services we need and organising democratic workplace control – involving service users and the wider working class as well as the workers involved – as a step towards the socialist transformation of society needed to end the oppression and division of capitalism.

Ending discrimination in society will also not be done by a law or a court within a system that relies on division to maintain its exploitation. We can only win in the courts what we have won in the workplaces and on the streets through collective organising. The vagueness of this ruling will now move the struggle for access to services and against discrimination to the workplaces.

It is therefore welcome that a number of trade unions supported the protests. The role for the trade union movement is as the organised mass force fighting for what’s needed – defending jobs and pay, ending austerity, fighting for services, like those supporting victims of domestic violence, to be run safely, with adequate screening processes, sufficient trained staff and specialisation to meet different needs, and striving for the united programme we need to counter division in the workplace and in society.

Fighting for all our rights means fighting for the formation of an independent workers’ party, based on the trade unions. That could pull together the struggles in the workplaces and the movements for trans and non-binary rights, as well as for women’s rights, against racism, and environmental destruction etc, and offer a socialist alternative to the capitalist profit system.

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SOCIALISTS**

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to find out more today!



See page 13 for more views about the court ruling

Protesting against the Supreme Court ruling across the country

London

20,000 people gathered in Parliament Square on Saturday afternoon to express their outrage at the Supreme Court’s recent decision. The message from the wide spectrum of society at the protest was: this decision is an attack on everyone’s rights, including other women, and we will not stand by while the trans community continues to be scapegoated by the capitalist elite. “There is a real fear that the UK government is headed in the same direction as the United States in regard to rolling back the rights of all marginalised groups”, one attendee told Socialist Party members.

Socialist Students members discussed the outcome on campus where the majority of young people have offered their support and solidarity to the trans community. Queen Mary Socialist Students recently won their campaign for the university to provide gender-neutral changing facilities on campus.

At this demonstration it was clear to see the cross section of anger at the Labour government’s commitment to austerity, repeals of the rights of already oppressed groups and the continuation of funding to weapons, war and genocide. Many people bought copies of the Socialist and there was interest in upcoming Socialist Party meetings on trans rights.

The turnout and mood of participants showed the scale of opposition to the attacks on the trans community. If 20,000 people are able to mobilise on such short notice in London alone, imagine the impact of a trade-union backed movement to oppose all attacks under this government and defend trans rights – a movement spanning across the country to support workers of all identities ensuring that they are both represented and protected in workplaces and the wider community.

EMILY LYNDON

CAMDEN AND HARINGEY SOCIALIST PARTY



Part of the Socialist Party team in London EMILY LYNDON

Bristol

Over one thousand protesters turned out in Bristol. Many speakers went up and voiced their absolute disgust at the Labour government and the need to join the struggle for trans rights with the fight against cuts to disabled people’s benefits.

Sheila Caffrey, member of the Socialist Party and on the national executive of the National Education Union, spoke and laid out the hypocrisy of the recent ruling. If it was brought about to protect women, why do we see public services being gutted by the Labour government: public services such as women’s shelters, emergency housing and the slashing of legal aid?

CLINT HATCHER

BRISTOL NORTH SOCIALIST PARTY

Swansea

At least 250 protesters rallied in Swansea to stand up for trans rights. The speakers put forward a call for unity against oppression, rejecting the false ‘divide and rule’ narrative that trans rights come at the expense of anybody else.

With all the attacks facing society, it is so positive to see that we have not been stunned into despair. This was not the first protest, called at very short notice, to have been well-attended in Swansea recently. This was reflected in the speakers’ contributions and the crowd’s reactions. We’ve had enough, we’re ready to battle, and we’re confident we are going to fight until we win.

Our leaflet, with a headline of “Fight for trans rights and socialist change”, argued a way forward for everyone – including women – as part of a united struggle that draws socialist conclusions. Leaflets, and copies of the Socialist, were snapped up – we could have done with more!

BEN GOLIGHTLY

SWANSEA SOCIALIST PARTY



At the Swansea protest ALEC THRAVES

Leeds

Hundreds of people protested in Leeds expressing worry about the impact of this judgement including access to basic facilities like toilets. Within days of the ruling the British Transport Police announced that strip searches of trans women would now be done by male officers which also raised anger and concern.

The protest also expressed anger at Starmer’s Labour for its attacks on working people, including the U-turns on trans and LGBTQ+ rights and wider attacks on benefits. The protests show the need for an alternative to the mainstream parties and a desire to fight. These calls to fight were rightly linked to the importance of building a united struggle of the working class to challenge the social conditions that lay the ground for this judgement coming about after more a decade of austerity. The rights and services we have only exist because they were fought for in the first place.

Despite the media’s attempts to present these attacks as supported by most people, the protest drew considerable support from the general public with passers-by cheering and joining the protest themselves.

MICHAEL JOHNSON

LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

Plymouth

In Plymouth, where I helped organise the demonstration alongside others, over 200 people gathered in the city centre. Armed with banners, flags, and defiant slogans, protesters made their voices heard loud and clear.

There was fear, yes - fear of what this ruling would mean for trans people and the erosion of their rights - but there was also immense solidarity.

People came together not only to oppose an unjust ruling but to celebrate trans lives. As the protests continue across the country, it’s clear that the fight for trans liberation is far from over. The ruling is a blow, but it has only strengthened the resolve of those fighting for a world where all people – regardless of gender identity – are treated with respect, dignity, and equality.

GIU ALEXANDRIA

PLYMOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY



A placard at the protest in Sheffield

NEU conference agrees a national ballot

But a fighting strategy and leadership prepared to stand up to Starmer is still needed



SHEILA CAFFEY
NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION EXEC MEMBER,
PERSONAL CAPACITY

National union conferences are important: they bring together reps and activists to discuss what needs to be done. They are made up of a range of people – from hard-working reps to officials defending their positions; those who focus on defending individual members and those who want to build wider action. And there are delegates like the Socialist Party members, who put forward the strategy and programme that are essential to ensure that we can take on the government and the bosses.

This means the range of debate is wide. In the National Education Union (NEU), many debates focus around what education should look like to be beneficial for children and young people, communities and education workers. This includes discussions against schools becoming exam factories, and the need for a broad, inclusive curriculum, to how AI is changing teaching techniques. These are important for us as socialists, and as NEU members in the Socialist Party we link improvements we can fight for now to what education might look like in a socialist society.

It was agreed to move to a formal ballot for teachers over the 2.8% unfunded pay deal currently on offer for September, if it isn't improved. Unfunded would be a disaster! It would push cash-strapped schools further into debt and force most to consider redundancies. The funding is definitely the issue that most members are concerned about.

When the National Executive discusses next steps, red lines are going to have to be clearly formulated: what funding is acceptable? What pay level are we demanding – is it in line with inflation or is it pushing to recoup the decade-plus of pay cuts? Where do threats to support staff jobs come in? How about further education and early years members, who are facing even worse funding cuts?

The ballot timeline will also need to be clear to make sure members are confident there will be a clear national lead aiming to win. Socialist Party members will fight for the strongest campaign and ballot possible to fight for decent pay and adequate funding to prevent cuts, closures or downgrading of student support.

The funding and job cuts lead to the issue of crippling workload for teachers. It is regularly cited as one of the top reasons that teachers leave the profession in the first three years from qualifying. With funding and job cuts, this excessive workload is often shifted on to support staff meaning they are carrying out work



Socialist Party fringe meeting at NEU conference shows solidarity with Birmingham bin workers
PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

motion to conference to discuss this. The leadership was clearly worried about what the membership might think, so they argued on the pre-conference Executive that it didn't fit the criteria to be heard. This was overturned after we and others opposed this move. But the person who had led the charge to try and shut it down then was elected to ask the conference whether they wanted to hear the motion, and managed to achieve winning the conference to vote against hearing the urgent motion. We will see over the next year how this plays out, but we will look to address this again at next year's conference. The need for a lay-led union that isn't stifled by the government and employers is essential.

Another discussion that made headlines in the media was around Reform. Daniel Kebede, NEU General Secretary, correctly raised the need to campaign against the right-wing, populist party and to put forward an alternative. But what is the alternative? We need trade unions to take a lead on uniting workers around slogans such as 'jobs, homes and services, not racism', and to raise the need for a political alternative to the current mainstream and right-wing populist parties. We need to push for workers and socialists to stand in elections. Unfortunately, none of the motions passed managed to push this forwards.

Other important issues discussed, such as academies and support staff, will be addressed in further articles. Socialist Party members will build the pay ballot in our local branches, and continue to argue for a fighting strategy and leadership locally and on the national executive.

Although the Telegraph likes to write about militant union bosses, in reality the NEU has just signed a partnership deal with the government, CEOs of academy trusts and leaders of faith schools, and is hesitant to push forward on campaigns that would undermine this. The partnership deal was signed in January behind closed doors and members weren't informed until after the event (see 'Why we opposed 'Improving Education Together' at NEU Executive' at socialistparty.org.uk).

There was meant to be an 'urgent'

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Vote Marion Lloyd for president and for a fighting NEC

PCS MEMBERS

Members are currently voting for the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS). A lot is at stake, as the Labour government prepares huge attacks on our members.

The two-day PCS NEC on 16-17 April demonstrated again why change is imperative, and why it is extremely important that members vote for Marion Lloyd and the full list of candidates that form a 'coalition for change' in the union elections that close on 9 May.

Since the February NEC, government announcements have signalled a full-frontal attack on civil service staffing, with expectation of 15% cuts to 'administrative' budgets by 2030. This follows announcements of 2% cuts in July 2024, and of 5% cuts in October.

What is the General Secretary's response? Fran Heathcote moved a wildly complacent paper which proposed no meaningful actions. It even noted the government's attack on Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) across government as an 'opportunity' but did not outline a national strategy to resist threats to jobs, deferring this until late May.

When Marion Lloyd proposed recommendations to improve the paper, including with measures to proactively build the confidence

of members and reps to fight back, the proposals were vetoed by President Martin Cavanagh. This anti-democratic measure has been used again and again by Cavanagh against the majority of the NEC that was elected last year. Actions agreed in January, which at the time Cavanagh described as having "unanimous" support, have still not been carried out.

This is the context in which 'Democracy Alliance' – the electoral grouping which includes Heathcote and Cavanagh's 'Left Unity' group – has offered members a strike levy refund. This strike fund is the money that would be used to fund any serious action to defeat the government's cuts and to win us a pay rise. The pledge is nothing more than a desperate bribe, worth no more than £35 per member. A democratic union with a fighting leadership is worth far more than that.

Having collapsed the union's national campaign in 2023 and vetoed every attempt to build one in 2024, Democracy Alliance/Left Unity is seeking to distract members from their lack of response to potentially 80,000 job cuts and a below-inflation 2025 pay rise.

In contrast, at the NEC, the majority proposed some simple steps to get things going now, some of which had already been agreed but not implemented. This includes: issuing a branch briefing on discussions with the government's Cabinet Office,



Marion (left) PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY

and urging all branches to call members' meetings before conference to explain the need for a campaign; to produce leaflets to support that; and an extended May NEC to allow thorough discussion of the campaign against government attacks.

There is no room for the complacency Cavanagh and Heathcote are showing.

In the current national and group elections we urge all activists and members in all parts of the union to vote for Marion Lloyd and the team of candidates that make up the coalition for change, which includes the PCS Broad Left Network (in which Socialist Party members participate), the Independent Left group, and independent socialists. This coalition won a majority last year, but this year we need to strive to increase that majority so it cannot simply be overruled by the president – and even better, to win a fighting socialist president! It is absolutely time for a change.

Scan for full slate of candidates



Or search 'PCS must fight Starmer's cuts' at socialistparty.org.uk

Gatwick luggage handlers strike

CALLUM JOYCE

SOCIALIST PARTY SOUTHERN REGION

Unite members at Gatwick Airport took strike action over the Easter weekend after their employer, Red Handling, routinely failed to make correct payments into their pensions, as well as implementing new, unpopular working conditions.

Around 50 workers stood on the noisy and vibrant picket line – many of them young and taking strike action for the first time. One of the union reps reported that they have seen an increase in the number of workers joining the union in recent years.

It was clear that Red Handling bosses have brought this dispute on themselves through the dismissive way they treat their own workforce. Workers are missing out on wages they are rightfully owed but, strikers told us, just as the strike started, one of the top managers has gone on a two-week holiday to Las Vegas!

One striker described Red Handling as "the worst company I've worked for" and reported even having to carry out their own payroll to ensure that payments were being

One striking worker spoke to the Socialist:

WHY ARE YOU ON STRIKE TODAY?
"We're on strike today because of lack of payment of pensions, late payment of pensions, not being paid on the day we're meant to be paid, and not being paid correctly."

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THE MANAGEMENT OF RED HANDLING?
"They just need to pay what they're meant to pay. We've got to the point where we don't have much choice really. We've tried talking to them and they just don't want to know."

DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE FOR BIN WORKERS IN BIRMINGHAM WHO ARE CURRENTLY ON STRIKE?
"We're all in this same problem together aren't we? Companies need to pay what they need to pay. Pay people correctly and a decent, fair wage."

made correctly.

One striker reported that the company has previously pleaded poverty,



Workers are missing out on wages they are rightfully owed but, strikers told us, just as the strike started, one of the top managers has gone on a two-week holiday to Las Vegas!

trying to justify their failure to properly pay staff. The Socialist Party says that Red Handling's books should be opened to democratic inspection by the workers and their trade union to see if that is really the case – don't trust the reports of fat-cat managers.

The airport should be nationalised – along with all the subcontracted companies like Red Handling – under workers' democratic control, to provide a decent public service as part of a properly integrated transport system, rather than lining the pockets of greedy shareholders.



PHOTO: CALLUM JOYCE

PETE DICKENSON
AUTHOR OF PLANNING FOR THE PLANET, TOWER
HAMLETS SOCIALIST PARTY

A climate catastrophe far worse than any yet seen is much closer now than when the first edition of Planning for the Planet was written in 2011. January 2025 was Earth's hottest month ever, which followed 2024 as the warmest-ever year. The Los Angeles metropolitan area was devastated by out-of-control forest fires in January this year, a disaster made much more likely by a global increase in temperature of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, measured in each of the last 13 months. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2022 for the first time explicitly linked current extreme weather events with increasing global temperatures.

Droughts and heatwaves have decimated access to water in many regions of the world. This is particularly true in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. According to UN data, these areas have suffered intensification of drought cycles, where 10 to 12 of the driest winters since 1902 have happened in the last 20 years. Climate change is increasingly a factor leading to political unrest, for example the Arab Spring of 2011, the continuing Israel/Palestine conflict, where access to scarce water has always been an underlying issue, and civil wars in Yemen and the Horn of Africa. In Europe, devastating floods triggered a mass movement in Valencia, Spain, last Autumn.

Unfortunately, the prediction made 14 years ago that it was unlikely capitalist governments would take meaningful action to address global warming has proved to be true. Despite the warning of the Los Angeles fires, which followed a year of extreme weather events, US imperialism has taken no action to address the situation. In fact, the US and all the other big powers have backtracked on their already inadequate climate policies, a retreat that has turned into a rout after the re-election of President Trump. Not surprisingly, the US has led the way, with Trump taking a wrecking ball to any previous attempts, although inadequate, to reduce temperatures.

‘Drill baby drill’

His ‘drill baby drill’ mantra promoting the oil industry will do massive damage to the environment, but pulling America out of international climate agreements will make little difference. Climate treaties and agreements have been almost totally ineffective. The vast majority of climate initiatives between 1998 and 2022 had no significant impact on reducing the greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Mercator Research Institute. Attacks on Trump by former US president Joe Biden, and his Democratic Party, are hypocritical - Biden and his predecessor, Barack Obama, presided over one of the fastest expansions of the fossil fuel industry in history, by

36
fossil fuel companies are responsible for half global CO2 emissions

aggressively promoting shale oil and gas output.

In Britain, Primer Minister Keir Starmer did not wait for Trump's victory to slash his much-vaunted £28 billion 'green new deal'. He could see that the prospects for the UK to secure a profitable niche in the renewables industry were remote, particularly since the low-wage, high-tech Chinese juggernaut is rapidly cornering the market. The latest country to join the retreat is Brazil, crucial because preserving the Amazon rainforest is vital to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The replacement of the former climate denier president, Jair Bolsonaro, with President Lula was supposed to herald a new beginning. But now the country has approved an invitation to join OPEC, the oil producers' cartel, just months before hosting the next UN international conference on addressing climate change. Also, it was one of 15 countries to ask the UN to abandon a proposed levy on CO2 emissions, the main cause of climate increase, from global shipping.



Unfortunately, the prediction made 14 years ago that it was unlikely capitalist governments would take meaningful action to address global warming has proved to be true

China, the world's second-biggest economy, appears to contradict the trend of the other big powers. In 2023, it produced more renewable technology than the rest of the world put together. Total renewable investment was \$1.6 trillion, accounting for all the country's economic growth that year. Although renewables now make up half China's electricity generating capacity, it emits by far the most greenhouse gases of any country, and this is accelerating. Burning coal is the main cause. Coal-fired power plant construction was at a ten-year high in 2024, despite President Xi Jinping's pledge in 2021 to 'strictly' control this source of energy. The paradox can be explained by China's promotion of renewables being a bid, successful so far, to dominate the world market in green technology. Tackling climate change is a secondary motivating factor at best.

Western governments like to congratulate themselves on cutting greenhouse gases and, by implication, blame China for global warming. Rishi Sunak, Tory Prime Minister until 2024, claimed Britain had the best record in the world for cutting greenhouse gases. He said emissions had halved in Britain since 1990. However, despite cutting emissions by 50%, Britain is still behind its targets. Also, emission reductions in the UK and in other Western countries are due largely to their 'export' to China, following deindustrialisation. If this is factored in, there has been a very minor reduction in emissions in the West.

With the partial exception of China, governments' retreats on climate

are following the lead of the big corporations. 36 fossil fuel companies are responsible for half global CO2 emissions, and well before Trump's re-election these firms were complaining their profits would be seriously threatened by meaningful climate action and demanded a policy change. BP was prominent in this movement, when it shamelessly abandoned its earlier commitment to renewables and announced a big increase in drilling for oil and gas. Other former 'green champions' like Unilever and investment firm BlackRock followed suit. BlackRock, with \$11.5 trillion in assets, about four times the size of the UK economy, in 2023 voted to support 20 out of 493 pro-environment resolutions at the AGMs of firms it invests in. In 2022, it backed about half of similar motions.

The top global climate institution for banks, the 'Net-Zero Banking Alliance', with assets of \$54 trillion, will soon be voting on abandoning its pledge to align its assets with the Paris Agreement's aim of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. This followed an exodus of

big US banks following the second Trump victory.

Antagonisms at the IPCC's annual climate summits deepen each year. The UN body has been in retreat since the 2009 abortive Copenhagen meeting it said was the last chance to avoid climate catastrophe. Even before the USA again pulled out of IPCC involvement this year, the body was under increasing pressure to bow to the fossil fuel lobby. The last two annual summits (COP 28 and 29), were presided over by major oil-producing states, UAE and Azerbaijan. Both meetings were marked by coordinated attempts by oil producers and their allies to obstruct and dilute any moves to strengthen climate policy. The UAE President of COP 28 said there was "no science" behind attempts to phase out fossil fuels and this would take the world "back into caves" if implemented. There were also press reports that the UAE was lobbying for oil business at the event.

Deadlock in international attempts to tackle the environmental crisis is not restricted to global warming. For decades, under UN auspices, agreement has been sought to address the destruction of the natural world. One million species are threatened with extinction, soils are becoming infertile and water sources are drying up. Intensive agriculture is the main driver of biodiversity loss, threatening

85% of the 28,000 most endangered species. Plant and insect populations are falling dramatically due to dangerous insecticides. Chemical and plastic pollution is also a growing problem.

The latest UN conference on this issue was held in Cali, Columbia in 2024. As in previous events, the main bone of contention was money, in particular the exploitation by big pharma, healthcare corporations, agribusiness and tech conglomerates in the West of the genetic information

contained in certain plants and animals found in mainly poor countries. This information is used by firms to produce cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food and other products. A key aim of the conference, as in numerous similar events before, was to ensure the benefits were shared fairly with the peoples living in the countries concerned.

The meeting was deadlocked on the key questions of who should pay, how much and when, the same issues

that had derailed every summit for 20 years. After the talks collapsed, it was agreed to reconvene the meeting in March this year. Despite the mutual congratulations usual at the end of these gatherings, the poorer nations were reluctantly forced to accept a deal. The \$200 billion it was agreed to 'mobilise' was far off what was agreed was necessary previously in 2022. Three-quarters of nations had not submitted any plans on how to meet their target.

Climate change is on the front line of the trade wars now raging between the big powers. The protectionist lobbies in the US and EU are partly driven by the massive expansion of green tech exports from China. For example, exports of Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) increased 160 times from 2019 to 2023. Even before the new Trump presidency, the EU had imposed a nearly 50% tariff on Chinese EVs, and the previous Biden government in the US had proposed non-trade tariff barriers (health and safety requirements etc.) that would have effectively banned nearly all Chinese EVs.

A second major climate trade flashpoint is securing access to minerals that are important for green technology, such as lithium and cobalt. Trump made Ukraine an offer it couldn't refuse for the US to secure the country's lithium deposits, and the big powers are currently fighting it out in Africa to grab the continent's huge mineral resources.

These conflicts, as well as the failure over decades to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming, have a common root cause: the quest for profit by the big corporations and, at a more fundamental level, the inevitable tendency of competitive markets to degrade the environment.

85%
of the 28,000 most endangered species are threatened by biodiversity loss which is driven mainly by intensive agriculture

Some socialists and greens may say they do not need any more facts to be convinced of the seriousness of the situation. However, it is still necessary



PLANNING FOR THE PLANET

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to answer the climate deniers' and sceptics' position, however baseless, strengthened by Trump's re-election.

Many workers and trade unionists understandably fear their jobs could be threatened by going green and, more generally, are sceptical of the capitalist 'establishment', which promotes the false idea that it should be 'us' who foots the bill for dealing with climate change not 'them'.

Any convincing response to that lie, however, must include, as well as explaining the irrefutable scientific facts, putting forward a socialist programme which includes safeguarding jobs, pay, terms and conditions as well as improved living standards for all.

Socialist programme

The key elements of a socialist programme should include:

- Prioritising research and investment into renewable energy
- Nationalisation of the energy industry under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system
- For a major publicly funded insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock
- An integrated environmental plan of production, as part of an overall socialist plan, based on democratic public ownership of the key sectors of the economy



If the 'hidden hand' of the capitalist market is abolished by a planned economy, there must be an alternative method of allocating resources. Only institutions of producers and consumers - democratically constituted with real power - could play this role

Democratic public ownership is essential for a planned system to work efficiently. If the 'hidden hand' of the capitalist market is abolished by a planned economy, there must be an alternative method of allocating resources. Only institutions of producers and consumers - democratically constituted with real power - could play this role. It is true that modern computer and communications technology, AI etc, could play a very important part in facilitating the smooth running of a planning system, but the existence of democratic bodies will be paramount.

To build a carbon neutral society there will be a need for more jobs, as a very useful and detailed study by the Campaign Against Climate Change found. Although published several years ago, it remains very important in highlighting the possibilities for job creation. A detailed analysis of



Only the socialist organisation of society can create the conditions needed to urgently and seriously deal with the danger to the planet now. Global warming will become an even greater factor than today in world politics and social and economic relations

the sectors of a green economy concluded a million jobs would be created. Today, even more jobs would be needed in a green transition, many employing highly skilled scientists, engineers and technicians, such as in developing new forms of green energy like nuclear fusion or switching to sustainable air travel. Another example is decommissioning nuclear power stations. The Dounreay nuclear plant in Scotland was shut down in the mid-1990s today, there are 2,000 workers still on site, on a job which will take until 2070.

The programme outlined here, although focused on Britain, ultimately needs, in outline, to be implemented internationally.

Many green and environmental activists once put their faith in international negotiations to tackle the crisis. When this proved futile, they then tried to make the 'establishment' see the error of its ways by various forms of direct action. Some are now questioning this strategy.

The argument put here, that the struggles for socialism and to avoid environmental breakdown must go hand in hand is a viable, concrete approach that addresses the vital issues for environmentalists. Only the socialist organisation of society can create the conditions needed to urgently and seriously deal with the danger to the planet now. Global warming will become an even greater factor than today in world politics and social and economic relations.

Extreme weather events and other effects of climate change will be increasingly factors leading to political upheavals and mass movements, posing a challenge to the working class and its organisations. If no meaningful climate action is taken soon, there will be disastrous consequences, social and environmental. However, if the organised working class intervenes, drawing towards it the millions affected by the crisis, there will be a possibility to build a movement to transform society along socialist lines. The conditions would then be present for the first time to tackle the environmental crisis. The task is urgent. The first step must be rearming workers' organisations with a socialist programme, in Britain and internationally.

Committee for a Workers' International

FIGHTING FOR A SOCIALIST WORLD

socialistworld.net



WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:



WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all, without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.
- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.
- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.
- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.
- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.
- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.
- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.
- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

- A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.
- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.
- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.
- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

ENVIRONMENT

- Prioritising major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels and nuclear power with renewable energy, and ending the problems of early obsolescence – where products are designed to 'wear out' and be replaced – and unrecycled waste.
- Nationalisation of the energy companies, under democratic workers' control and management, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, in order to carry out a major switch to clean, green energy, without any loss of jobs, pay or conditions.
- A democratically planned, massively expanded, free to use, publicly owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.
- For a major, publicly funded, insulation and energy transition plan for existing housing stock.
- Agribusiness to be taken into democratic public ownership. For a food processing and retail industry under workers' control to ensure that standards are set by consumers, small farmers, and

all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Repeal the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.
- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.
- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.
- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage. For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.
- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

SOCIALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

- No to imperialist wars and occupations!
- Take the wealth off the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need, not to the fat cats.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the EU bosses' club. Organise a campaign with European socialists and workers' organisations to use the talks on post-Brexit relations to tear up the EU pro-capitalist rules. For a real collaboration of the peoples of Europe on a socialist basis as a step towards a socialist world.

Do you agree? Join the fightback!

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Students demand left Labour MP backs our fightback

ROBBIE DAVIDSON

MANCHESTER SOCIALIST STUDENTS

Manchester and Salford Socialist Students travelled to the office of Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey. We handed in a letter discussing the necessity of a political voice for the Funding Not Fees campaign (see right). Another letter called for international solidarity with students and workers facing brutal repression from Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey.

This was one of the next steps we agreed in our vibrant Funding Not Fees meeting a month ago. There, over 20 students and workers came together to talk about the need for a mass campaign for education to be run in the interests of students and staff.

Outside Rebecca Long-Bailey's office, new members of Socialist Students delivered short, impassioned speeches about the need for a politician to lead the fight for a decent future for young people. We want Rebecca Long-Bailey, Independent Alliance MPs around Jeremy Corbyn, and

other left-wing Labour MPs to raise an amendment to the government's summer spending review.

Rebecca Long-Bailey was suspended as a Labour MP by Keir Starmer for opposing the government's plan to keep the two-child benefit cap. But in February she was let back in.

An amendment to Labour's spending review should call for an end to tuition fees, for grants not loans, for fair rents, an end to redundancies, no more course closures, and divestment from arms sales. The democratic public ownership of universities, won through a mass fightback from trade unions and young people, could achieve all this.

● Manchester and Salford Socialist Students letter

Dear Rebecca Long-Bailey,
Higher education is in crisis. University vice chancellors have announced more than 2000 redundancies since

Manchester and Salford Socialist Students lobby Labour MP Rebecca Long-Bailey, asking she take up the call for funding not fees ALEX SMITH



the start of 2025 alone. For students, the threat of mass course closures comes on top of an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, as well as a planned tuition fee hike next year.

The Funding Not Fees campaign has been launched this year as a means to rally students alongside workers in a movement for fully funded and free education, instead of the cuts, cost-of-living crisis, and lifetime of student debt currently on offer to young people.

FUNDING NOT FEES CALLS FOR:

- No to Labour's tuition fee hike – scrap fees and cancel student debt
- Living grants, not loans
- Stop all cuts and closures on campus. End low pay and casualisation of staff
- Divestment from arms and big business – no place for profiteers from war and exploitation on our campus

Student campaigners have protested in support of the Funding Not Fees demands on over 35 university campuses this year. Members of the trade union Unison have balloted for UK-wide strike action in higher education. And the University and College Union (UCU) has recently launched a new national campaign, 'Stop the Cuts, Fund Higher Education Now'.

We, the undersigned, think that all these struggles urgently need a political voice. Currently none of the parties in parliament offer any real alternative to the dire situation in education.

That's why we are asking MPs to join the Funding Not Fees campaign, and publicly support the socialist solutions outlined above. Even just one MP boldly putting forward these ideas would provide a much-needed socialist parliamentary lead to the thousands of students and workers in education who are fighting back. It could inspire many thousands more to join this fight too, as we saw in the mass support for Jeremy Corbyn's pledge for free education.

We would like to invite you to a meeting on 26 April in room 1.219 at University Place, Manchester, or at your earliest convenience, to discuss how you could play this role. Specifically, we would like to invite you to:

1) Raise the Funding Not Fees campaign demands in parliament – including by submitting an amendment (or private members' bill) to any aspect of the government's June spending review that seeks to make students and workers pay even more for the crisis in education.

2) Speak at a Funding Not Fees protest at Manchester University later this academic year.

3) Support our demands regarding Manchester University's Fallowfield campus redevelopment to guarantee affordable, high quality, and accessible accommodation for all students to be managed by a democratic student body, which will ensure fair rents in the future.

We look forward to hearing your reply. In solidarity,

MANCHESTER AND Salford Socialist Students

JACOB LLOYD

CARDIFF GRADUATE TUTOR AND UCU MEMBER
(PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Neoliberal policies make university life harder for all, be it unmanageable staff workloads or increased student fees. These have been issues at Cardiff University, with controversies surrounding vain and costly capital projects, unsustainable international recruitment, exorbitant upper management salaries, and, most recently, the shock-and-awe announcement of hundreds of staff redundancies.

The departments of modern languages, music, history, religious studies, and archaeology have been proposed for closure. The university executive board has begrudgingly scaled back its plans to cut nursing, after our protests.

Murky

University finances are murky. It is imperative that the university's financial books are opened to public scrutiny and democratic workers' oversight.

Vice chancellor Wendy Lerner has a basic salary of £290,000, supplemented with a recently refurbished mansion and private family healthcare. Outrageously, she has repeatedly refused to use any of the university's £188 million accessible reserves to ease the current crisis.

Yet, she is leading a cruel and callous quick-fix approach, motivated by the spurious decision to chase a 12% operating surplus. Pursuing unrealistic profit margins, at the expense of the wellbeing and livelihoods of loyal staff, reveals utter disconnect from this not-for-profit institution's original mission statement.

Meanwhile, the University and

Union steps up to fight Cardiff uni cuts



ARIS PREVOST

College Union (UCU) has mobilised. The militant mood is manifested in hundreds rallying in protests to express their outrage. Cardiff UCU has overwhelmingly voted 83% in favour of strike and other action, on a 64% turnout.

Most universities in Britain are heading towards deficit. What happens at Cardiff will set a national precedent. It is therefore essential that there is a fighting trade union response.

At Cardiff University, the current levels of engagement from staff, students, and the general public are immense. Socialist Students campaign stalls on campus are proving particularly popular for cutting through to the crisis's root causes.

Strike

Cardiff UCU will be holding its first one-day strike on 1 May, followed by a proposed marking boycott from 6 May, and a series of strategically targeted strike days, if the compulsory redundancies are not withdrawn.

There are Senedd (Welsh parliament) elections in 2026. While Cardiff's Labour MPs have publicly expressed concern, they have gone little further in applying meaningful pressure.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady seems set on a strategy of partnership with the Labour government. But there lies no future in hoping for Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves to drop a few crumbs our way.

The Welsh Government's recent £19 million injection into the university sector is welcome. But it constitutes a drop in the ocean of this national crisis. Alone, Cardiff uni claims it is losing £30 million a year. University workers have no

democratic control to ensure this money is used properly.

Under Jo Grady's UCU leadership, the national strike in 2023 petered out, with minimal returns for members' hard-fought efforts.

Labour

We must pressure the Labour government to fund education properly, and to abolish exploitative student fees. A militant, socialist-led union is key in this fight. There are now two Socialist Party members elected to the UCU's National Executive Committee, reflecting the membership's appetite for a pro-working-class programme that challenges the bosses.

Rather than punish staff who have given their professional lives to Cardiff uni, or students who have spent tens of thousands of pounds on their education, we call for the university to demand better funding from the Labour government. Just a 4.3% increase in corporation tax could be used to scrap tuition fees, and provide free university education for all students.

Universities must be run democratically, by committees of elected staff, students, and the local community for the benefit of everyone, rather than by a closed and self-protecting circle of grossly overpaid, disconnected, and incompetent elites.

Socialist Students' 'Funding Not Fees' campaign calls for full public funding and democratic control of education, paid for by taking the wealth off the rich.



Join the student fightback
JOIN socialist students
socialiststudents.org.uk/join



Equity has helped lead the campaign that has so far saved Bethnal Green Working Men's Club - an LGBTQ+ performance venue HUGO PIERRE

London Equity members discuss fight against austerity

JAY COWARD AND JAMES IVENS
EQUITY MEMBERS

Delayed trade union rights, renewed arts austerity, lack of political voice – London members of Equity have urged the performing arts union to step up these fights.

Labour and workers' rights

Topping the vote at the pre-conference London regional meeting in March was a motion on Labour's Employment Rights Bill moved by Socialist Party member Jay Coward, Equity London South branch. It argued that Council (Equity's executive committee) build towards a mass movement alongside sister unions, calling for: an immediate repeal of the last two anti-union laws – promised but still not delivered by the oh-so-worker-friendly Labour government; repeal of all anti-union laws; restoration of full collective bargaining rights; and a special conference, in line with TUC (Trades Union Congress) policy, to discuss how to win back all our tools to fight, backed by a Saturday demonstration and industrial action if necessary. Next highest was a motion on arts education, seconded by Socialist Party member James Ivens of Equity

London North branch. This is a sector with recent and still-brewing national disputes in other unions, another opportunity to coordinate. Before the latest crisis in university funding, the Tory government halved funding for cultural subjects in 2021. This January, the prestigious Bristol Old Vic Theatre School announced it will no longer train undergraduates. Reversing those cuts is an urgent fight. Alongside the whole tuition fee model, the audition fees charged by drama schools must go – for full public funding, free education and living grants. Labour has also maintained the Tories' 'EBacc' curriculum and other restrictive policies in children's education. These strangle cultural and vocational opportunities, for working-class students especially – and must go too. Low pay endemic Low pay remains endemic. Equity's general policy is to fight contracts up towards national median levels. The West End dispute in 2023 brought hope. What's the next step there, the meeting asked? General secretary Paul Fleming, currently standing for re-election, listed some impressive gains – but

said "you can't have shibboleths in negotiations". The question, however, is not of rigid shibboleths, but a strategy to keep moving forward. Members still need that from the union's left leadership. A panel discussion on the crisis in variety entertainment put Bethnal Green Working Men's Club in the spotlight. The threatened sale of this space would destroy an important LGBTQ+ performance venue. A campaign co-led by Equity, with supporters including Tower Hamlets Socialist Party, has won a stay of execution. But we heard they are not in contact with local politicians at any level. Tower Hamlets Council is led by left-of-Labour 'Aspire'. Equity should pressure them to take the building into public ownership! New party Members were particularly frustrated by the futility of pleading with an uncaring, money-hungry Labour government and MPs. Jay spoke again on the need for a political alternative – a new, mass party of the working class, based on the unions. This is a truly thorny question in Equity's traditions and rules... and was met with the best response of the day, whoops and cheers.

Spreading socialist ideas and raising funds

SAM SMITHSON
WALTHAM FOREST SOCIALIST PARTY

Waltham Forest Socialist Party participated in a local Palestine protest, putting forward our programme against war and austerity, stressing the importance of building working-class resistance in Palestine, Israel, England, Wales, and across the world. We were warmly received by many of the activists in attendance. 47 of them bought our Socialist paper, as well as donating to our fighting fund. One individual gave £10 in a single donation.

Horror in Gaza

It gave us a clear indication of the mood of people in the local Palestine movement, who are horrified by the ongoing atrocities being committed in Gaza on a daily basis. We know it is important to be present at demonstrations in solidarity, to spread our political message about what can be done. But it is also an opportunity for us to ask people to

donate to our fighting fund, which we use to pay for campaigning material. Encouraging fighting fund donations from workers is one of the most important activities we do. It not only supports our work financially, but demonstrates a vote of confidence for socialist ideas. What we're fighting for I would encourage every Socialist Party member, that when they're next out campaigning, engage people in conversation about buying the Socialist, and making a small contribution to the fighting fund. It is a lot to expect a worker to commit part of their wage to someone they may have just met. But they may be more inclined if we explain that the money is a contribution to a party fighting for the working class, and an end to all wars internationally.

Help fund the fightback

DONATE

socialistparty.org.uk/donate

AREA	£ RECEIVED	£ TARGET	Q2: APRIL-JUNE 2025	DEADLINE: 30 JUNE 2025
North West	773	1,200		64%
South West	1,154	2,100		55%
Wales	749	2,400	31%	
East Midlands	562	2,050	27%	
West Midlands	575	2,700	21%	
Northern	146	800	18%	
Yorkshire	325	2,650	12%	
London	603	5,000	12%	
Southern & SE	244	2,400	10%	
Eastern	45	1,300	3%	
Other	557	2,400	23%	
TOTAL	5,733	25,000	23%	



Sam (right) and Waltham Forest Socialist Party showing solidarity with striking Birmingham bin workers at the Palestine protest

● Socialists win respect in Crawley for fighting Labour cuts

ROBIN BURNHAM
BRIGHTON AND CRAWLEY SOCIALIST PARTY

For the past eight months, I have done a Socialist Party campaign stall in Crawley town centre, every day of the week. At the general election, Labour won the seat from the Tories, but only because their support collapsed. Labour also won less votes than in 2019, when Jeremy Corbyn was leader. Since then, Labour has attacked kids, pensioners, students and small farmers. People have come up to the stall saying they didn't vote for Labour for them to attack us. Our 100% support for working-class people to have a better life has won us respect.

'You're doing right'

One woman went into a shop and bought me a blanket to keep warm. I have lost count of the people who have offered to buy me a coffee. "You are doing a great job", "Respect for what you are doing", are just two comments made from passers-by. But contrast this support to the attitude of Crawley Labour council. On 17 January, an officer from the council's licensing department approached our stall, along with two police community support officers, to tell us to pack up and never return. The Socialist is registered as a newspaper. It and its predecessor Militant have been sold around the country for 60 years. Why is the Labour council trying to silence political opposition? We won't let them stop us campaigning! The working-class attitude to these threats is expressed in the following sentence from one young woman in a wheelchair, when told the council was trying to shut us down: "Fuck 'em. You're doing right!"

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Fethie (centre) with Socialist Party and Socialist Students ALEX SMITH

I was intrigued by 'what is socialism', now I've joined

FETHIE
MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIALIST PARTY

Joining the Socialist Party has been an enlightening experience in such a short time. I've had amazing conversations about things I've always been interested in. It's been a lesson and a comfort. Being surrounded by other people who are engaged to learn more about the world, willing to stay curious, is the reason why I'm staying. I joined the Socialist Party after going up to one of our campaign stalls at Manchester Met uni. I was particularly intrigued by the public meeting on 'What is socialism?' What better way to learn what socialism really is than from socialists themselves.

Questions

Although I was scared to go alone, I'm glad I did. And even felt comfortable enough to ask a question. Everyone spoke so well. And it was such a welcoming environment. The process of someone presenting a 'lead off' on a topic was so interesting, definitely something I want to do in future meetings.

Local Socialist Party members, Alex and Robbie, were so helpful providing me with all the information needed when I was joining. Their ability to answer all the theoretical questions I had was incredible. Working class They emphasised the role of the Socialist Party over left-wing 'celebrities'. The working class is the majority, we need a socialist revolution. By joining the Socialist Party, you get hands-on experience in fighting to bring about socialist change, and talking about the ideas of socialism to everyday people. I've gained experience, from public speaking to organisation. Every member is important, and you can clearly see that. The Socialist Party is on the side of the oppressed. Through capitalism, oppression of all kinds continues to thrive, and only through socialism can it be ended.

Do you agree?

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

socialistparty.org.uk/join

"I have never seen socialists out here before" - Swindon socialists come to Chippenham

DESEMONA STOTT
SWINDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Swindon Socialist Party has achieved a milestone – holding two campaign stalls across two towns. For a relatively young and small Socialist Party branch, we were encouraged to act decisively on our plans to host a stall in Chippenham by older Socialist Party members.

Betrayed by Starmer

Not everyone was gracious towards our presence, a challenge every stall endures. But this was offset by an overwhelming amount of like-minded people. All of whom were angry at Labour's policies, an overwhelming majority of these people felt betrayed by Starmer.

A kind member of the public, who was once involved with young socialist movements, said: "I have never seen socialists out here before". With these thoughtful words, we were emboldened. Not more cuts More people spoke of their struggles with disability, homelessness, and worry over future cuts. We were able to express our positions strongly and coherently on these issues, and expressed our support. We sold out of Socialist papers on our Chippenham stall, raising £55 across our two stalls, including selling 20 Socialist papers. Try out a new location, I would highly recommend it.



Socialist Party campaigning in Chippenham... and Swindon

After the Supreme Court verdict, the reality of trans lives today

I have recently discovered that I identify as non-binary. As one of my preferred pronouns is 'he', I am always called by what I would like to be called by strangers and professionals. And when I ask questions at a business, I am often given a quick and satisfying answer. My husband is a trans man. He is the same age as me, comes from a similar socio-economic background as me. And yet he lives in an entirely different world to me. We are reminded day after day of the

hardships faced by trans members of the LGBTQ+ community. Doctors are hesitant to offer any advice, or outright refuse treatment. Both HMRC and DWP refuse to acknowledge his name and gender, forcing him to answer to a name that does not belong to him. And if he asks for his actual name to be used? We are threatened with our money being stopped. The waiting list just to have an appointment to start the process of beginning Hormone Replacement

Therapy (HRT) was two years. And Wales is considered the fastest of all the waiting lists! One of the reasons I joined the Socialist Party was the commitment, in not just words but visible action, to fight oppression in all its forms. The long history of pro-LGBTQ+ action this party has taken has been a bulwark for my husband and I. We know that there are people out there fighting for us to have the right to exist. And we are so proud to be with them, as comrades.

A socialist world, run by the working class for the interest of all, not just the wealthy and powerful few, is the only way to ensure freedom and safety for all. Let us continue the march forward for a fair, just and socialist world. TRISTAN GJERTSEN In my day-to-day life I am recognised as a woman. I have had Gender Reassignment Surgery, and I have a Gender Recognition Certificate. Most people who meet me for

the first time don't know that I'm trans unless I tell them. With this ruling, will I now be expected to use men's facilities in public, or else risk prosecution? If arrested will I be sent to a male prison? (And what do you think will happen to me in a men's prison?) No politicians are coming to save us. No billionaires are backing us. ALICE MULVAY ● Read protest reports and editorial on pages 4-5

Qatar: Potential for change amid anti-democratic moves



Migrant workers in Doha, Qatar PHOTO: ALEX SERGEEV/CC

FARIS AL-MUQAWAMA
LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT SOUTH SOCIALIST PARTY

In 2024, nearly half the world's population was called to the ballot box. But beyond the global spotlight of the US election, a quieter yet significant development took place in the Gulf state of Qatar. Rather than an election, Qatar held a constitutional referendum, one that effectively abolished the electoral process for its Shura Council (its nominal parliament).

Around 90% of votes supported the referendum. At first glance, this may seem surprising - until it is considered that only around 12% of Qatar's population are citizens with voting rights. The vast majority of the population, around 88%, are migrant workers primarily from South and Southeast Asia, who are systematically excluded from political participation.

The Qatari regime maintains its rule by ensuring the loyalty of its small citizen population through state handouts and privileges. This

strategy, aimed at avoiding dissent, is mirrored across other Gulf monarchies. Meanwhile, the migrant workforce, upon which the region's entire economy depend, faces brutal exploitation, lacking rights, and the threat of deportation. Trade unions are banned, and labour protections are minimal. Despite this, there have been numerous reports of strikes and protests, though these are difficult to organise under such repressive conditions, even when the government tries to hide the situation with state-owned news outlets.

Western governments are quick to acknowledge their own role in the invasion of Iraq, but less often are they confronted with their complicity of the Gulf regimes. These states are not passive actors - they are central to the global capitalist system, trading oil and gas in return for Western arms and protection. Those same weapons fuel the ongoing war in Yemen, now the site of one of the worst man-made humanitarian crises in decades, and were used to brutally suppress uprisings during the Arab Spring.

Yet the potential for change remains. International attention around events like the 2022 World Cup helped shine a spotlight on Qatar's abuse of migrant workers. As a result of this pressure, reforms such as the introduction of a minimum wage and the supposed abolition of the Kafala system (a form of bonded labour often described as modern slavery) were enacted - though in practice, many of these abuses persist.

This shows that even in deeply authoritarian contexts, resistance is possible. The struggle of workers in the Gulf, both local and migrant, deserves international support and solidarity, both in their struggles and in building their own movement. Socialists in Britain and across the world must raise our voices and build pressure from below, demanding an end to imperialist support for Gulf monarchies, and fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism's horrors - whether in London, Doha, or Riyadh.

London protest calls for an end to the war in Sudan

JOHN GILLMAN

A demo and march from Marble Arch to Downing Street of around 300 people for peace and justice in Sudan took place on 19 April. Chants called for an end to the war and the return of a civilian government.

Our Socialist Party leaflet, calling for an end to the war and no support for either of the counter-revolutionary generals, went down well. It also called for a government of workers and the poor with a socialist programme, for regional and imperial powers out of Sudan, to stop the generals' break-up of the country but for

the right of self-determination for all ethnic groups and workers, and community control of international aid to ensure it gets to affected areas.

It also said that lessons have to be learned from the last civilian government that was ended by a military coup in 2021. We also highlighted that the neighbourhood committees that were established during the mass struggles in 2019 gave a serious challenge to military rule and showed the potential for a mass, united struggle of workers, young people and the rural poor. And that any movement needs to be independent from all the pro-capitalist forces and from

any imperialist meddling.

Our leaflet argued that the struggle needs to be armed with a socialist programme aimed at overthrowing capitalism by nationalising the banks, the big land properties and all foreign owned firms, under the democratic control of working people and the poor. By doing this, and appealing to the working class and oppressed internationally, a socialist Sudan could be rebuilt after the war to end poverty and war for good.



Brutal exploitation and threats - an agency worker on the production line



PHOTO: NEIL T/CC

MANSFIELD SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBER

Some years ago, I worked for nine months at a packaging factory. There was an oversupply of workers and not always enough jobs. This was obvious every morning when the agency would send two double-decker buses to collect the workers (at their own expense, almost an hour's pay) but not all of them. Everyone would be told to arrive at the collection point at 6am the following day, ready for work. But that did not guarantee a place on the bus. Each morning some would be turned away and told to come back the following morning when the cycle would repeat.

If you were sent to work that day, the factory was cold, wet and loud, with no room to move around while stood at the production line. Breaks were only allowed within the allocated times. Even stepping back for a few seconds to stretch would be met with scorn from the keen eye of the supervisor, whose main job was to threaten people with the sack if they didn't speed up their work. Toilet breaks would have to be requested as though we were school children and were sometimes denied. Shouting was common and sometimes fights would break out, including on one occasion, in a fight involving the small knives we would use for the job, a woman's cheek was cut. The conditions created this kind of behaviour.

Safety standards were terrible. People worked under heavy machinery and were sometimes told to put their arms into machinery to recover things. One man was hit by a forklift and his leg was reversed over and

broken. I saw another man smashed into a wall by a forklift that was driving forwards with a load on the forks, so the driver couldn't see what was ahead... a breach of safety standards anywhere. He was ok but we were all threatened with the sack if we said anything about it.



The supervisor would constantly 'crack the whip' shouting: "Faster! Faster! Or you won't work tomorrow!"

But the biggest problem we faced each day was the extremely monotonous and mentally numbing nature of the work. The entire job could be learned in ten seconds, there were no options to do other jobs within the factory and people were not rotated around. I saw many people start the job, and within a matter of hours they would walk out. One man in particular stands out to me. He told me he was recently made redundant from his previous job and needed something urgently as he had three children to take care of. He worked until ten minutes after the first break and then walked out, and was easily replaced the next day. The nature of the work was completely degrading and alienating. We were only doing the job because a machine had not yet been invented that could do the job for us that would save the business owners some money, and their contempt for us showed for every minute

I was there.

The production line had overhead walkways where the supervisors and managers would stand, watching over us. The supervisor would constantly 'crack the whip' shouting: "Faster! Faster! Or you won't work tomorrow!" When the manager above the supervisor would arrive, at least two people were guaranteed to be sacked on the spot. If 50 of us were working, there would always be two people slower than everyone else, the manager would watch us for a few minutes and then order two people to the canteen under a tirade of verbal abuse and sign them out, their day was over. This could be at 10am on a day that didn't finish until 6pm, so they would have to wait in the canteen, unpaid, for eight hours before the agency would send the bus to collect everyone.

It's important to understand that it's capitalism that both enables and, more importantly, encourages these types of management practices. The constant cracking of the whip, the threats and intimidation, the denial of basic human needs and pitting one worker against another are all necessary for the normal functioning of capitalism.

Eventually I was able to leave but still kept in contact with some people there. I was informed of a spontaneous strike that occurred in December 2019, without any union involvement. In the busiest period, the factory was short of workers and the workers knew it - they demanded £15 per hour and stood outside until after two days the management gave in and granted them a temporary pay rise until the busy period had ended.

This is the power of an organised working class.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

- Send your news, views and criticism witheditors@socialistparty.org.uk - or if you're not online, PO Box 1398, Enfield EN1 9GT
- We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Confidentiality will be respected if requested

THE SOCIALIST INBOX



PHOTO: LINKS/FLUSS/CC

Starmer waters down proposed Hillsborough law

Readers are likely familiar with the Hillsborough tragedy, which happened at the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, 15 April 1989. But for those unaware here is a summary.

The South Yorkshire police force in collaboration with significant elements of the media (most notably media owned by Rupert Murdoch) and the Thatcher government concocted a story of anti-working class slander about the 97 Liverpool fans who died. These innocent people were crushed to death, some as young as ten, as a result of negligence from the police force and an outdated stadium which was designed in the 19th century. The Leppings Lane end of the ground where the crush happened did not hold a valid safety certificate; it had not been updated since 1979.

It took until 2016, 27 years later, for the British legal system to finally admit that these deaths were 'unlawful' - but not one person who was responsible for it happening was held to account. Not Kelvin MacKenzie, the editor of a so-called 'newspaper', which falsely accused surviving fans of stealing from the pockets of the dead. Nor David Duckenfield, who was in charge of South Yorkshire Police and in 2019 somehow was found not guilty of gross negligence manslaughter charges.

With this long shadow of injustice, alongside other instances worthy of their own articles (the Grenfell fire disaster was a very recent example), the Labour Party included in its manifesto a pledge to implement a 'Hillsborough law', which would attempt to prevent it ever happening again. Measures in this proposed law included entrenching a legal right for 'David vs Goliath' cases to guarantee money

for the 'Davids' and establishing a legal power against public servants (police, politicians, media etc) to prosecute them under criminal charges if they lie or impede the legal process.

Where is this legislation? It has been postponed amid controversy that the Starmer government is watering it down. Labour had promised the law by the anniversary on 15 April. Yet another broken promise but not the first time Labour has let down the Hillsborough families. Blair and Brown's governments cosied up to Murdoch and refused to open an enquiry into the Hillsborough disaster for 12 years. It took Andy Burnham, a cabinet minister at that time, being publicly berated by 40,000 people chanting for justice at the 20th anniversary memorial for any enquiry to come into being. The legislation has allegedly been watered down causing uproar. The families of the victims are frustrated and West Derby Labour MP Ian Byrne (himself a Hillsborough survivor) has publicly expressed dissatisfaction.

Would this law, even in a draft which establishes a legal route to prosecute crimes against innocent working-class people, stop future injustices? The answer is no. For as long as the media is owned by the likes of Murdoch, the police are unaccountable and governments are ruled by those in the pockets of the media and mega-corporations, then how can we have accountability? For as long as we live in a capitalist society, in which money and therefore power is concentrated into the hands of very few, it will always be one rule for them and another for the working class. A Hillsborough law would be a step forward and we should support the victims' families in demanding it be as strong as possible. But only the socialist transformation of society will rid us of a system which kills 97 football fans and covers it up for 27 years.

DEAN YOUNG
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

Labour's immigration 'hygiene' comments shows whose side they're on

Labour's Antonia Bance MP caused a stir recently after a BlueSky post in which she described immigration as a "hygiene factor" for voters. She wrote: "Immigration is for many voters a hygiene factor: if you have demonstrably lost control ... then they can't hear what you have to say on other issues..."

The post was later deleted after people quite rightly pointed out the undertones associating immigration and foreign nationals with "hygiene" is racist. Bance later claimed this a common political idiom in Westminster and she was using the term in reference to Herzberg's "two-factor theory" where "hygiene factors" refer to basic conditions that must be met before people will engage with broader issues.

Even if we accept that explanation at face value, it doesn't make things better. What it tells us is that Labour still sees immigration not as a matter of human lives, families, and communities but as a problem to be managed. Immigrants are not people to stand in solidarity with; they're a political headache to be neutralised. This is what racism looks like when it's dressed up in the language of political strategy. Human beings are not stats!

The bigger issue here is what this says about Labour's political strategy. Rather than push back against the hard-right narratives coming from the Tories and Reform UK, Labour is trying to lead on them. The assumption seems to be that if they sound 'tough' enough on immigration, they can win over reactionary voters without losing support elsewhere. The opinion polls show this isn't working; Reform UK is more popular than ever and Labour's lead has evaporated.

Labour didn't win a 'landslide' victory because the country wanted more of the same. People were crying out for change after over a decade of Tory rule. But time and again, Labour has turned its back on its voters, choosing austerity over workers and the most vulnerable people in society.

On 1 May 2025 we can send a clear message, vote for TUSC or an independent socialist candidate where you can. It's time for trade unions to back candidates that will fight in our interests and to start building a new mass workers' party - one that doesn't accept racism, backs workers and puts people before profit.

BARTON WICKETS



Antonia Bance PHOTO: ROGER HARRIS/CC

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the Socialist

Issue 1318

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formerly **Militant**

WE CAN'T TRUST STARMER

WE NEED A NEW WORKERS' PARTY



HANNAH PONTING
LIVERPOOL SOCIALIST PARTY

After 14 years of Tory austerity, many hoped that a Labour government would pose a positive alternative and mark a shift in policies towards those that support ordinary people. It is evident that the Labour Party no longer works in the interests of working-class people.

This can be seen very clearly through the numerous cuts made by the Labour government towards particularly vulnerable areas of society.

Like the cuts made to pensioners' winter fuel allowance and to disabled people's benefits, including freezing Personal Independence Payments (PIP) so that they don't rise alongside inflation, and cutting incapacity benefit.

There are also attacks on students and young people. Alongside the rise in university tuition fees, there are proposed cuts of £500 million in education, even floating the idea of axing the guarantee of universal free meals for infants.

Labour's refusal to scrap the two-child

benefit cap also keeps many children and families in poverty.

And all this at a time when everything is going up. But our wages don't keep up.

In the face of this continued austerity, increasing crisis, destruction of council services and even more privatisation in the NHS - now delivered under a different party banner - it is important, now more than ever, that the working class has a political voice.

We need to build a new mass workers' party, grounded in socialist policies and with the

backing of trade unions, in order to provide a genuine alternative.

This is why members of the Socialist Party stand as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) in elections: to provide a clear alternative for workers, and to offer a signpost towards the kind of political movement we urgently need.

Where they are taking place, we are standing in May's local elections to put a socialist challenge to Starmer's Labour, as well as Tories and Reform, at the ballot box.

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS ►►► see column on p10

